WILDLIFE OF ODISHA

NATURE'S WONDERLAND

ODISHA

Forest and Environment Department

Government of Odisha

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'Nature's Wonderland Odisha' is a visual compilation of Odisha's wildlife, giving an insightful glimpse into the dense jungles, breathtaking lakes, meandering rivers and picturesque forests of Odisha. The photographs unveil how in these habitats, our wild animals thrive, just the way nature intended them to. The publication also covers the birds and aquatic creatures seen along our coasts and in our rivers and lakes.

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Olive Ridley Sea Turtle at Gahirmatha Beach

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NAVEEN PATNAIK
CHIEF MINISTER, ODISHA

STATE SECRETARIAT
BHUBANESWAR

MESSAGE

I am glad that the Forest & Environment Department, Government of Odisha is bringing out a publication, namely "Nature's Wonderland Odisha", as a tribute to the wildlife and forest resources of our State.

We are proud to inherit a unique legacy of diverse and rich ecosystem full of different species of plants, animals, fungi and microorganisms. Nature has blessed our State with this priceless and rare treasure trove. Let us nurture it for our future generations. Every part of the planet is connected directly or indirectly with our life. When species are lost, eco-systems cannot function properly and the lives of all associated partners, including human beings, would be disturbed. The Government of Odisha stands committed to protect and preserve wildlife. Let us show zero tolerance to illegal trade in wildlife and make a difference.

1 compliment the Forest & Environment Department and all those associated with this publication.

1 am sure, this coffee table book will unfold new insights into Odisha's wildlife and encourage a whole new generation of nature and wildlife enthusiasts.

NAVEEN PATNAIK

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Bijayshree Routray
Minister
Forest & Environment

Government of Odisha

FOREWORD

I am pleased to note that the Forest & Environment Department, Government of Odisha has brought out 'Nature's Wonderland-Odisha' as an insightful publication with visual treats unfolding the wonderful world of animals and birds in Odisha's forests. The publication serves to unveil the rare attractions for the wildlife enthusiasts and tourists and also goes on to remind us of our responsibility to protect and preserve this rich treasure of the state. To percept the importance of safety and conservation of wildlife, so many National Parks, Sanctuaries and Zoological Gardens have set up in our state. Amidst it, many zoo and deer parks have also been set up at different parts of the state for procreation and conservation of endangered and cataclysmic animals and birds. These forests and parks are also serve as the lungs for the people of Odisha.

We are all aware, how the effects of rapid urbanization are depleting our ecosystem. Towards creating a healthy environment and maintaining a balanced ecosystem, it is necessary to change our lifestyle and contingent intentions. I seek for everyone's assistance and support to ensure the safety for natural forest splendour and wildlife animals. Animals and birds are the most classical and attractive creations of the almighty. Their safety and sustenance can only be assured through our forbearance and pitiful behaviour towards them.

I hope this publication generates a fresh wave of awareness towards protection and preservation of the rich flora and fauna of Odisha. I extend my compliments to all those who have extended their contributions towards compiling this insightful publication.

Bijayshree Routray

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Suresh Chandra Mahapatra, IAS
Additional Chief Secretary
Forest & Environment Department

Government of Odisha

FOREWORD

It gives me immense pleasure that Forest & Environment Department, Odisha has brought out 'Nature's Wonderland-Odisha', a visual compilation of our rich wildlife. Such a publication is indeed an inspiring reminder for us all on how fortunate are we all to be inheriting such a rich treasure trove of Mother Nature. The book unfolds various species of animals and birds thriving in their natural habitats for nature lovers, wildlife enthusiasts and all those engaged in protecting and preserving this rich legacy.

It is heartening to note that this publication affirms the dedicated efforts of Forest Department towards preserving our rich forests. After all, they symbolise our closeness to the nature and our commitment to preserve a green and diverse environment for our future generations. I am sure the publication would inspire all the stakeholders to keep up their relentless commitment and nurture these landmarks of our natural ecosystem.

I congratulate all those who have extended their contributions towards compiling these photographs and the insightful content in this publication. The nature lovers and wildlife enthusiasts are definitely going to welcome it as an invitation to come and explore this wonderful backyard of Mother Nature.

Suresh Chandra Mahapatra, IAS

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Dr Sandeep Tripathi, IFS
Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife)
& Chief Wildlife Warden, Odisha

Government of Odisha

FOREWORD

We take great pride in the incredible treasure trove of Odisha's diverse and rich ecosystem with different species of plants, animals, birds, fungi and microorganisms. We inherit this rich legacy with a responsibility to preserve it and make dedicated efforts towards nurturing our forests and bio-diversity. The growing human population and increased developmental activities are affecting the wildlife habitat which are no longer disturbance free and are also facing fragmentation leading to wild animal depredation. We all stand committed to conserve and protect flora and fauna within and outside their habitats. Managing the wildlife with disturbed surroundings is a big challenge we all face.

For protection and conservation of wildlife and their habitats, the wildlife organization has been implementing various in-situ and ex-situ conservation measures. Incidences of wild animal depredation, rescue of wild animals, apprehending offenders in wildlife offence cases, monitoring the status of wildlife, protecting the wild animals and their habitats, creating awareness among the people and promoting eco- tourism for providing alternate sources of livelihood near protected areas, are some of the major activities in this direction.

The 'Nature's Wonderland-Odisha' is an insightful glimpse into the rich forest life of Odisha. The publication is also the visible visual results of our efforts towards wildlife conservation interventions. I am sure the book shall serve as a reminder to all stakeholders and general masses that wildlife conservation is a common responsibility we all share.

I commend all those who have contributed in compiling of this publication and hope that the contained information will be of immense use to guide the field staff and would provide valuable inputs to wildlife researchers, administrators, and nature lovers for conservation of wildlife.

Dr Sandeep Tripathi

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Acknowledgements

Time doesn't slow down or stop. Yet, there are places where you stand mesmerised and spellbound. These are the moments when you simply stand and feel the magical rendition of nature, wondering what lays beyond this beauty and what's more in the store of nature's grandeur. Welcome to Odisha, the treasure trove of nature's priceless pleasures. The state has a geographical area of 1,55,702 Sq. Km. The forest cover in the state is 51345 Sq. km which is 32.98% of the states geographical area as per the State of Forest Report (SFR-2017) of Forest Survey of India. The state is endowed with a diverse range of terrains ideal to nurture its rich wildlife. The contiguous environment also makes it a perfect habitat as well as a breeding ground for a large number of migratory birds as well as turtles. Wildlife Conservation strives to protect and conserve the flora and fauna within and outside their habitats. To provide protection for wildlife and their habitat, a network of protected areas has been constituted.

Growing human population and increased developmental activities are affecting the wildlife habitat, which is no longer free from disturbance and is also facing fragmentation leading to wild animal depredation. Thus to manage wildlife in disturbed surroundings is a big challenge for wildlife managers. The Forest and Environment Department is committed to protect, preserve and nurture our rich wildlife. Visible results of our multi-faceted efforts can be seen in the shape of the thriving wildlife of the state, aptly brought out in this publication.

'Nature's Wonderland Odisha' is a visual compilation of Odisha's wildlife, giving an insightful glimpse into the dense jungles, breathtaking lakes, meandering rivers and picturesque forests of Odisha. The photographs unveil how in these habitats, our wild animals thrive, just the way nature intended them to. The publication also covers the birds and aquatic creatures seen along our coasts and in our rivers and lakes.

This publication will be of immense use to wildlife enthusiasts and nature lovers. It is a tribute to the rich and dedicated efforts of wildlife researchers, administrators and all those devoted to the conservation of wildlife.

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Tikarpada Landscape

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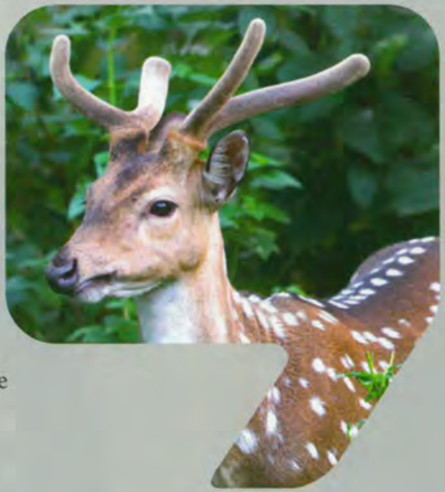
THE WILD SIDE OF LIFE...

Blessed is the pristine land where nature still sings its mellifluous songs and cubs of the wilds still feel as much at home as children of the concrete jungle. Odisha is one such paradise of the wilds. Even today, as urban expansion invades the right of way that Mother Nature herself granted equally to all her children in most of the country, Odisha retains its primeval innocence in over a third of its land mass. The Odisha forests are of two major types – tropical wet and tropical dry deciduous forests where wildlife is to be found in. And as human settlements expand their footprint, the State's Forest Department pursues a proactive, rehabilitative policy to mitigate the ill-effects of human–animal conflict. Since time immemorial, the natives of Odisha have worshipped nature and are, as a people, hugely invested in the commitment to forest and wildlife conservation. This sacrosanct commitment is deeply rooted in the holistic conservation vision of the State's Wildlife Organisation, which undertakes various in-situ and ex-situ measures to protect the many magnificent species of wildlife that the state is blessed with.

As of now, there are 19 Sanctuaries and one National Park in Odisha, besides other protected landscapes like Tiger Reserves, Elephant Reserves and Biosphere Reserves, as well as some Zoos. While Nandankanan and Chilka Lake are on the bucket list of wildlife enthusiasts from all over the world, the other sanctuaries and parks of the State are equally bestowed with bewitching beauty and fascinating, untamed inhabitants. Similipal is the only home to the melanistic tiger. Apart from normal Melanistic tigers are also available in Nandankanan Zoological park. Recently Black Panther was also reported from Odisha. As per records, Odisha boasts of 87 species of mammals, 524 species of birds, both native and migratory, 131 species of reptiles and 27 species of amphibians. These include 54 endangered species and some, like the white tiger, that are only still around thanks to captive breeding. Any wildlife explorer will be optimistic about coming face to face with regulars like elephants, leopards, hyenas, various varieties of deer and monkeys, gaurs, crocodiles, turtles, and monitor lizard. But it is every enthusiast's dream to have a chance to meet the rare breeds like the Olive Ridley sea turtle, some of the largest members of the crocodilian species saltwater crocodile, the Irrawaddy dolphin, the painted stork and the king cobra, to name a few.



This coffee-table book is dedicated to the forests and their inhabitants. It is a visual journey into the private lives of the proud, dignified citizens of the wild, as they go about the business of their daily chores, quite unaware of the fact that their routine is being captured and documented in the annals of Odisha's legacy, for posterity.

But before that, a brief glimpse of the Santuaries and National Park of Odisha.

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BHITARKANIKA is one of the most spectacular mangrove eco-systems located in the Kendrapada district. Spread across 672 sq.km of area, its rich mix of wildlife, green mangroves, migrating birds & turtles, estuarine crocodiles and meandering water courses truly connect you with nature.

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SIMILIPAL

The greatest allurement of SIMILIPAL is its picturesque landscape full of forests, hills and waterfalls. Stretching 1845.70 sq. km. in Mayurbhanj district, Similipal is the home to three of India's biggest flagship animal species – the Royal Bengal Tiger including Melanistic Tiger, Asian Elephant and Gaur.

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As one of the deepest gorges of Asia, SATKOSIA, the 795.52 sq. km. wonder spot in Angul district, is known for its breathtaking forests and swamps. Spread across the magnificent Mahanadi, it is the natural habitat for the most endangered gharials in India.

SATKOSIA

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BALUKHAND-KONARK

Renowned for its myriad wildlife BALUKHAND-KONARK Wildlife Sanctuary is located along the coast of the Bay of Bengal between Puri and Konark. Spread across 71.72 sq. km. of area, the Sanctuary has over 300 species of rare plants and wild animals. Spotted Deer, Striped Hyena, Jungle Cat and Olive Ridley Sea Turtles are the main attractions in this wildlife sanctuary.

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BAISIPALLI

Spread across scenic stretch of 168.35 sq. km., BAISIPALLI Wildlife Sanctuary in Nayagarh district, provides a natural habitat for various wildlife species like elephants, leopards, cheetals, bisons, barking deer and more.

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BADRAMA

The hidden treasure of wild flora and fauna, BADRAMA, a 304.03 sq.km. wildlife sanctuary is nestled in Sambalpur district, Odisha.

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CHILIKA NALABANA

CHILIKA is India's largest brackish water lagoon, the first Indian wetland of international importance and the largest wintering ground for migratory birds in the Indian subcontinent. Spread across 15.33 sq. Km., CHILIKA NALABANA Wildlife Sanctuary is located at the core area of the Ramsar designated wetlands of Chilika Lake.

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CHANDAKA DAMPARA

CHANDAKA DAMPARA Wildlife Sanctuary is a vast stretch of blooming eco-diversity. Located in Khurda district just adjacent to Bhubaneswar town, this 193.39 sq. km. domain has been the stronghold of elephants. Chandaka-Dampara forest ecosystem is also home to a variety of deers and also many carnivores.

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GAHIRMATHA Marine Wildlife Sanctuary in Kendrapada district is one of the world's largest turtle nesting grounds, spread over 1435 sq. km. It is the only Marine Wildlife Sanctuary in Odisha, serving as the natal nesting beach for millions of Olive Ridley Turtles who migrate from the Pacific Ocean.

GAHIRMATHA MARINE WILD LIFE SANCTUARY

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HADAGARH

The picturesque HADAGARH Wildlife Sanctuary in Keonjhar district would truly inspire the artist or a poet hidden within you. Spread over an area of 191.06 sq. km., it has a large water reservoir, attracting a variety of migratory and resident water birds.

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KHALASUNI

The majestic walk of the lords of the jungle domain is a sight worth of thousand words. Spread over 116.00 sq.km., KHALASUNI Wildlife Sanctuary in Sambalpur District, is an important Elephant corridor in the State. Along with the adjoining Badrama Wildlife Sanctuary, it offers a protective habitat for elephants.

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Spread over an area of 272.75 sq. km., KULDIHA Wildlife Sanctuary in Balasore District, supports a diverse faunal composition and is a vast repository of wildlife in the backdrop of hundreds of varied species of plants.

KULDIHA

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NANDANKANAN

A unique mix of the wild and the mild, NANDANKANAN Wildlife Sanctuary is one of the largest zoos of India, located in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. Spread over 4.37 sq. km, its natural forest provides home to wide range of wild animals and birds.

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SUNABEDA

The awe-inspiring 600 sq. km. SUNABEDA Wildlife Sanctuary is located in Nuapada district. With its vast plateau, canyons and waterfalls, Sunabeda is home to a wide variety of wild life including tigers, leopards, gaurs and more.

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KARLAPAT

Nestled in Kalahandi district, KARLAPAT Sanctuary is a rare land of great genetic and biological diversity. Spanning over 147.66 sq. Km., Karlapat's pride is its elephant population along with several rare and endangered animals.

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LAKHARI

The verdant stretches of LAKHARI Wildlife Sanctuary are located in Ganjam and Gajapati Districts in Odisha. Spanning across a green-filled area of around 185.87 sq. km., it is one of the most populated elephant sanctuaries in the country.

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KOTAGARH

KOTAGARH Wildlife Sanctuary, located in Kandhamal District of Odisha, is famous for its rich plant, animal and bird life. This 399.05 sq. Km. sanctuary has a rich bird life and reptiles crawling through the hundreds of varied species of plants.

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KAPILASH

KAPILASH Wildlife Sanctuary is a landscape full of uniquely rich floral, faunal and geomorphological diversity in Dhenkanal District. It is famous as an important habitat for elephants and some rare carnivores.

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Satkosia

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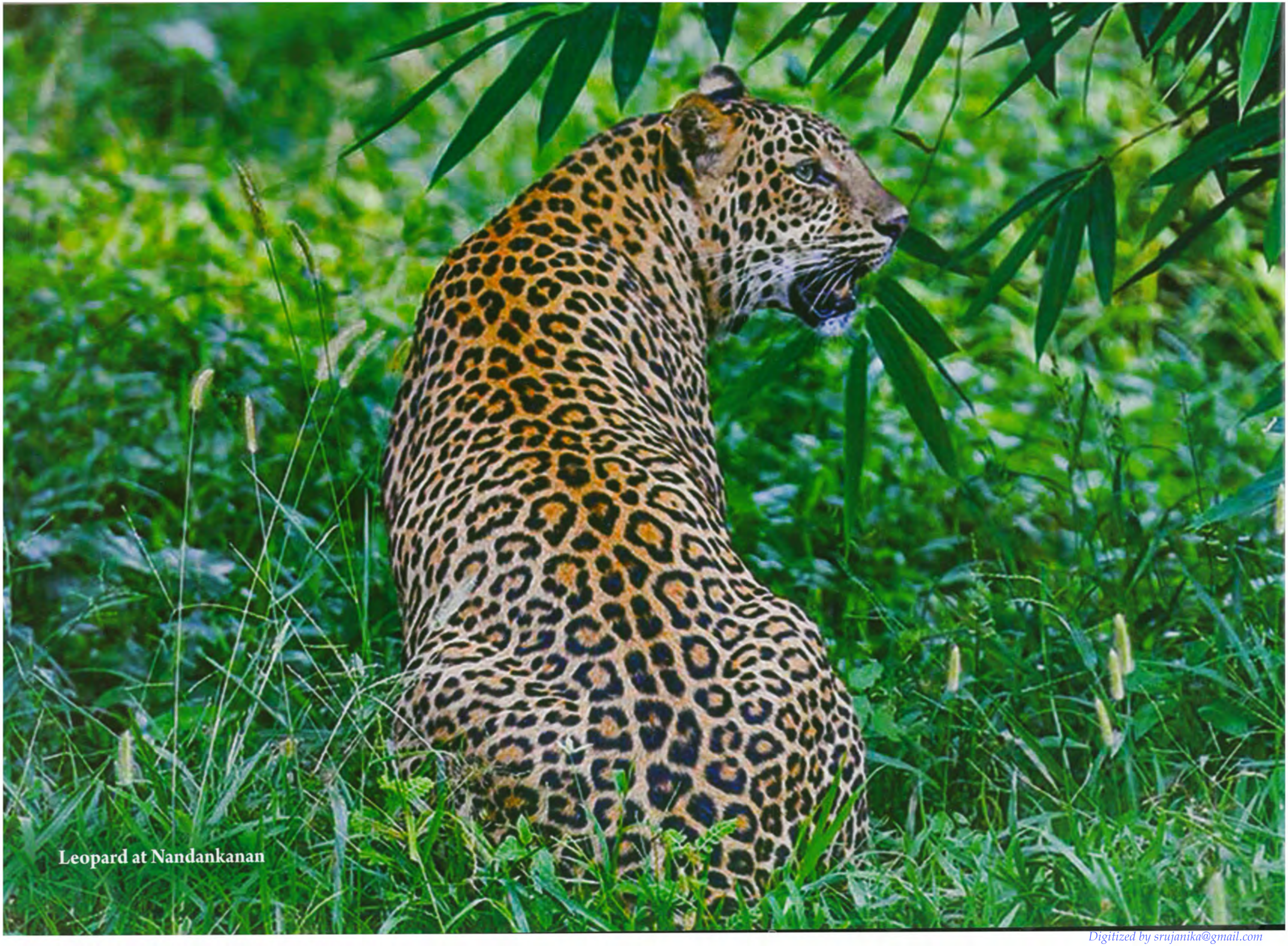
Leopard at Nandankanan

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HUNTERS OF ODISHA

They are the centrefold stars of those glossy geographic magazines or wildlife channels, but here in Odisha they come alive in all their majestic glory. Come face to face with these Hunters of Odisha, the predators roaring at the top of the food chain. The dense forests of Odisha are natural habitat for some of the rarest and endangered wild animals.

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Melanistic Tiger at Nandankanan

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Royal Bengal Tiger at Nandankanan

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Royal Bengal Tiger at Nandankanan

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Asiatic Lion at Nandankanan

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Leopard at Nandankanan

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Leopard at Nandankanan

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Bear at Nandankanan

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Wild Dog at Debrigarh

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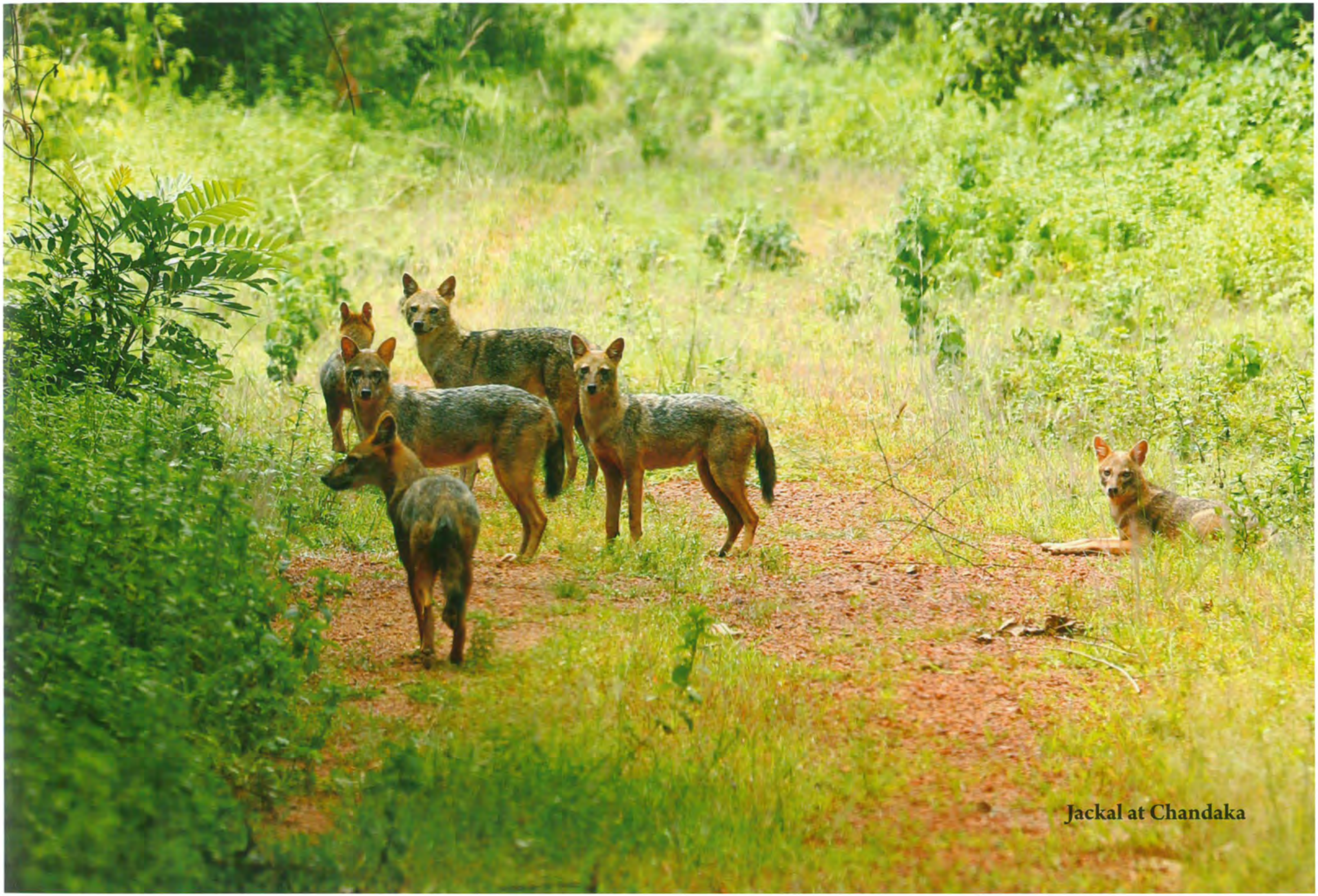

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Elephant at Debrigarh

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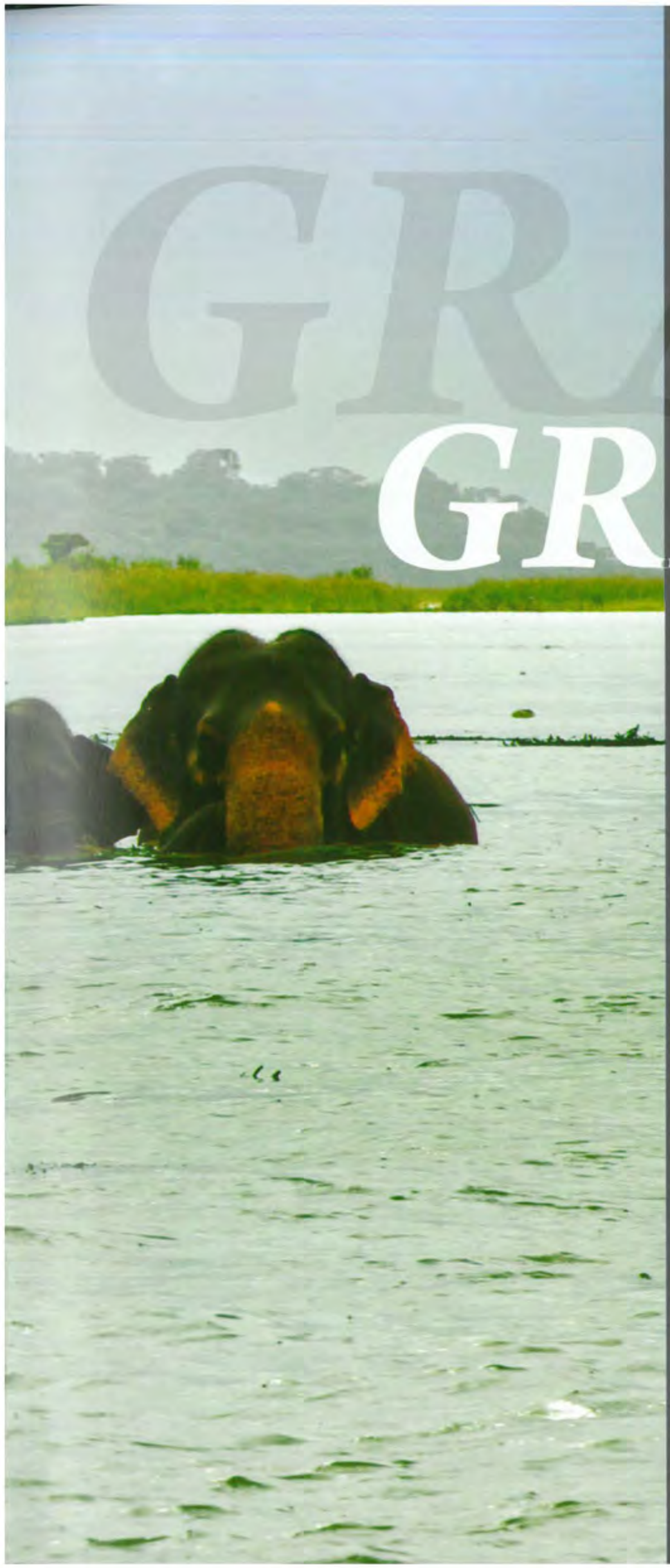

GRASS EATERS OF ODISHA

Complementing the scenic horizons, they add to the wondrous beauty for the viewing pleasure of all visiting beholders. Grass eaters of Odisha are simply the delightful and peaceful members of our wildlife family, always eager to be captured by wildlife photographers. Come; capture some heart-warming memories with grass eaters of Odisha.

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Elephant at Chandaka

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Elephant at Badrama

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Indian Gaur at Kuldiha

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Indian Gaur at Debrigarh

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Sambar at Khalasuni Wildlife Sanctuary, Sambalpur

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Sambar at Khalasuni Wildlife Sanctuary, Sambalpur

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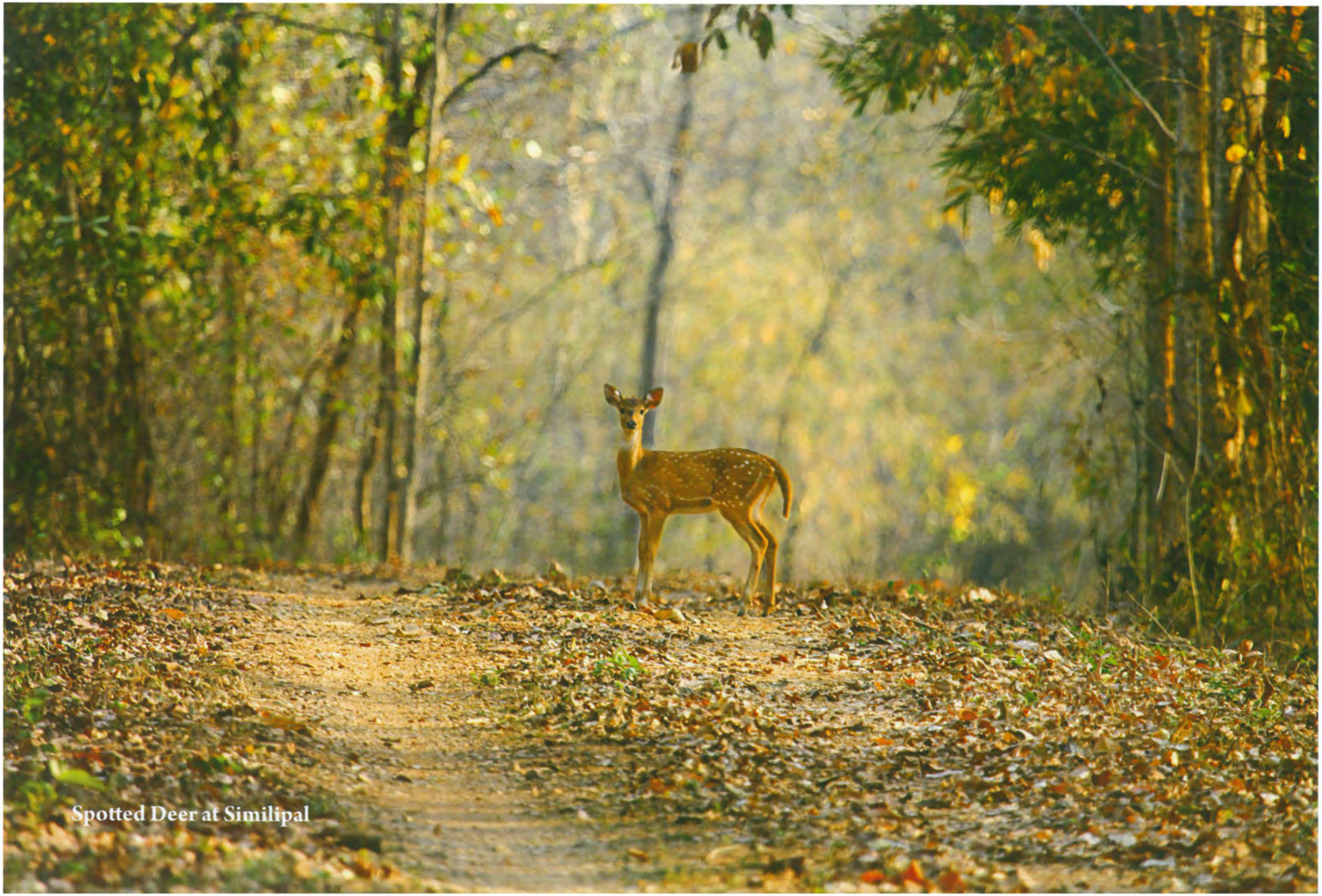

Spotted Deer at Similipal

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Spotted Deer at Kapilash

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Zebra at Nandankanan

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Blackbuck at Bhetnoi, Berhampur

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Greater Flamingos at Chilika

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WINGED WONDERS OF ODISHA

Up above the world so high...and down by the banks and beaches...birds truly add vibrant shades to the natural horizons of the state. Constantly flying and moving around and refining and changing the horizons with their ubiquitous charm and energetic movements. The rich vegetation and favourable environment makes Odisha a great habitat for birds, both resident as well as the migratory guests.

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Whiskered Tern at Chilika

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During the migratory season, Chilika becomes a rare sight that bird watchers can only dream of. This largest brackish water lagoon of Asia is actually the largest wintering ground for migratory birds. It hosts over 160 species of birds in the peak season. These birds travel great distances to reach the warm and delightful environs of Chilika. The migratory birds follow much longer routes than the straight lines, possibly up to 8,000 km, to reach Chilika Lake.

CHILIKA, THE WONDERLAND OF MIGRATORY BIRDS

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Eurasian Spoonbill at Chilika

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Ruddy Shelduck at Mangalajodi

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Eurasian Wigeon at Mangalajodi

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Purple Swamphens at Mangalajodi

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Bagagahana in Bhitarkanika (Open Bill Storks)

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HERONRY AT BAGAGAHANA

Nesting within the luxuriant environs of Bhitarkanika National Park, another bird paradise is Bagagahana. What makes its surroundings fairy-tale like, are the Pneumatophores or breathing mangrove roots, sticking out like short wooden stumps from the saline waters.

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Bagagahana in Bhitarkanika (Open Bill Storks)

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Juvenile Oriental Darter at Bagagahana (Heronry)

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Black Capped Kingfisher at Bhitarkanika

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Brown Winged Kingfisher at Bhitarkanika

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Stork-Billed Kingfisher at Bhitarkanika

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Mangrove Pitta at Bhitarakanika

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Indian Roller at Debrigarh

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Ospreys at Debrigarh

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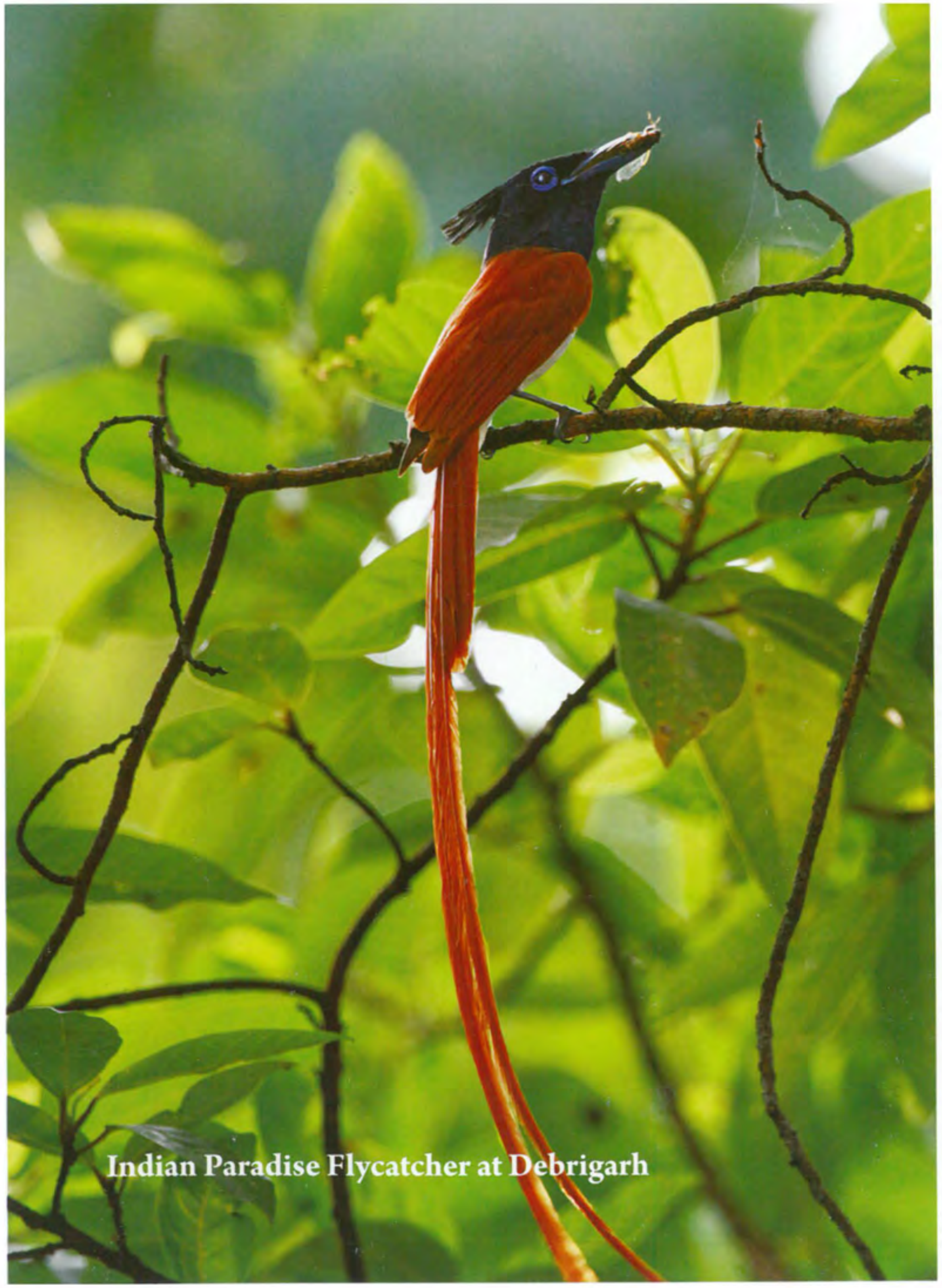
Indian Paradise Flycatcher at Debrigarh

Oriental White Eye at Debrigarh

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Indian Spot-billed Duck at Debrigarh

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Indian Skimmer at Badmul

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Indian Skimmer at Badmul

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Malabar Pied Hornbill at Baisipalli

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Sun Conure Parrot at Nandankanan

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Scaly-Breasted Munia at Lakhari Valley

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Little Cormorant at Mahanadi

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Estuarine Crocodile at Bhitarkanika with Landscape

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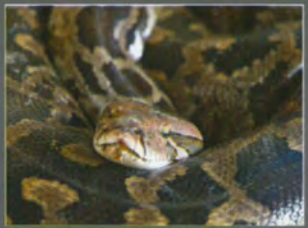
REPTILES OF ODISHA

They crawl and sneak, and are rather the shyest members of our wildlife. The green forests with rivers, lakes, swamps and marshes make Odisha's jungles a perfect habitat for the reptile family. There are over 131 species of reptiles present in Odisha. The stretches are home to one of the rarest and most unique creatures, making great subjects for photography.



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Estuarine Crocodile at Bhitarkanika

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CROCODILES

Odisha has the unique disticntion of having all the three spicies of Indian crocodilians namely Estuarine crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*), Mugger (*Crocodylus palustris*) & Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*).

Estuarine Crocodile at Bhitarkanika

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Mugger at Mahanadi

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Gharial at Mahanadi

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Estuarine Crocodile at Bhitarkanika

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Olive Ridley Turtle at Gahirmatha

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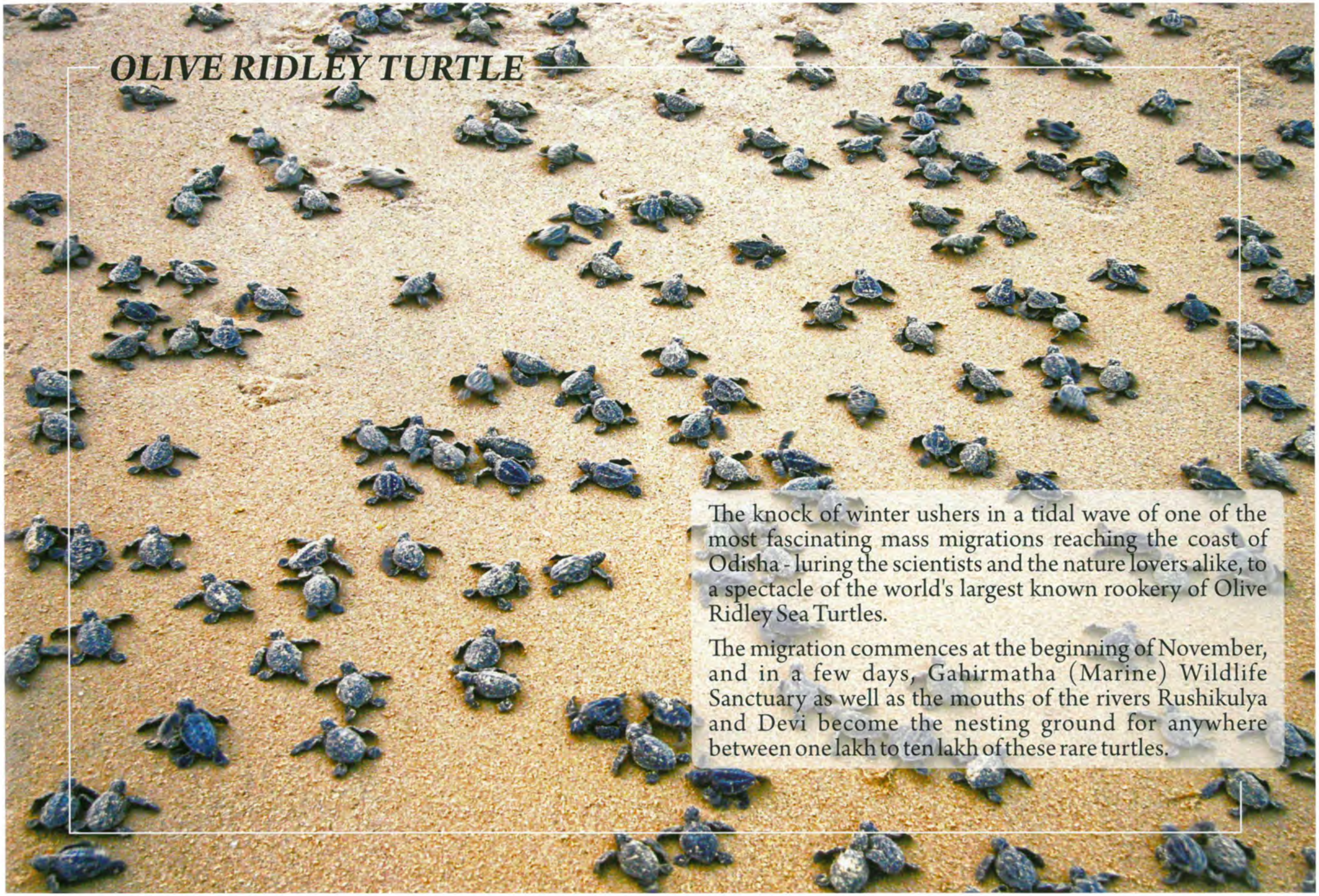
OLIVE RIDLEY TURTLE



The knock of winter ushers in a tidal wave of one of the most fascinating mass migrations reaching the coast of Odisha - luring the scientists and the nature lovers alike, to a spectacle of the world's largest known rookery of Olive Ridley Sea Turtles.

The migration commences at the beginning of November, and in a few days, Gahirmatha (Marine) Wildlife Sanctuary as well as the mouths of the rivers Rushikulya and Devi become the nesting ground for anywhere between one lakh to ten lakh of these rare turtles.

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Olive Ridley Turtles mating at Gahirmatha

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Mass nesting of Olive Ridley Turtles at Gahirmatha

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Olive Ridley Turtle coming out from Sea for Nesting at Gahirmatha

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Baby Olive Ridley Turtles heading towards sea at Gahirmatha

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Katha Kaicha at Satkosia Gorge

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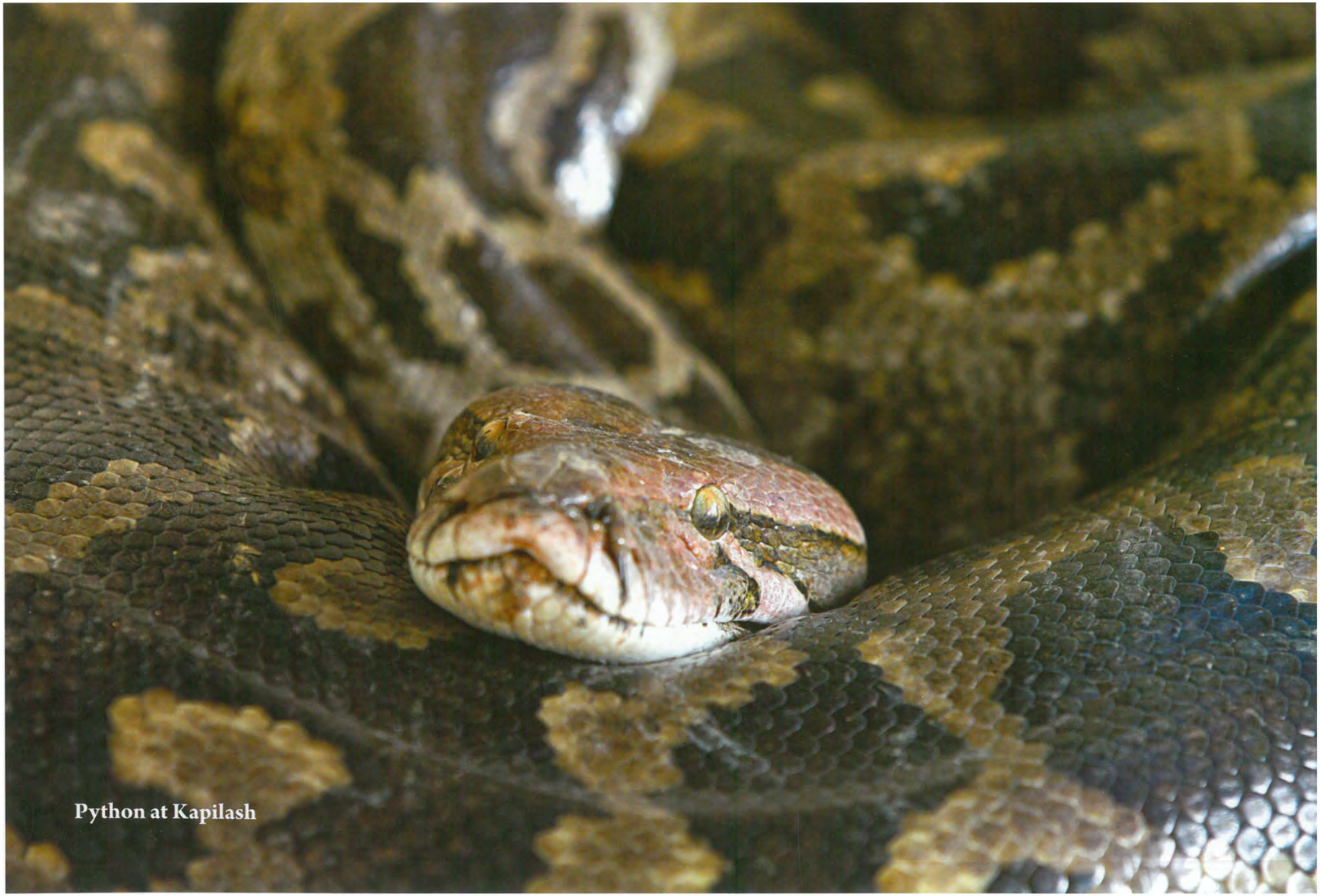
Python at Kapilash

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King Cobra at Bhitarkanika

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Landscape at Phulbani

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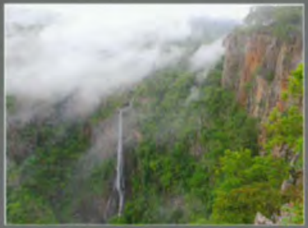
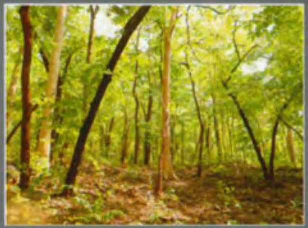
GREENS OF ODISHA

The awe-inspiring Odisha's green stretches offer one of the most spectacular natural phenomena in the country. They present some of the most exotic landscapes of infinite natural splendour. The hills, plateaus and isolated areas of the north eastern part of the state are covered by tropical moist deciduous forests whereas the southwest region of the state has tropical dry deciduous forests.

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Satkosia Landscape

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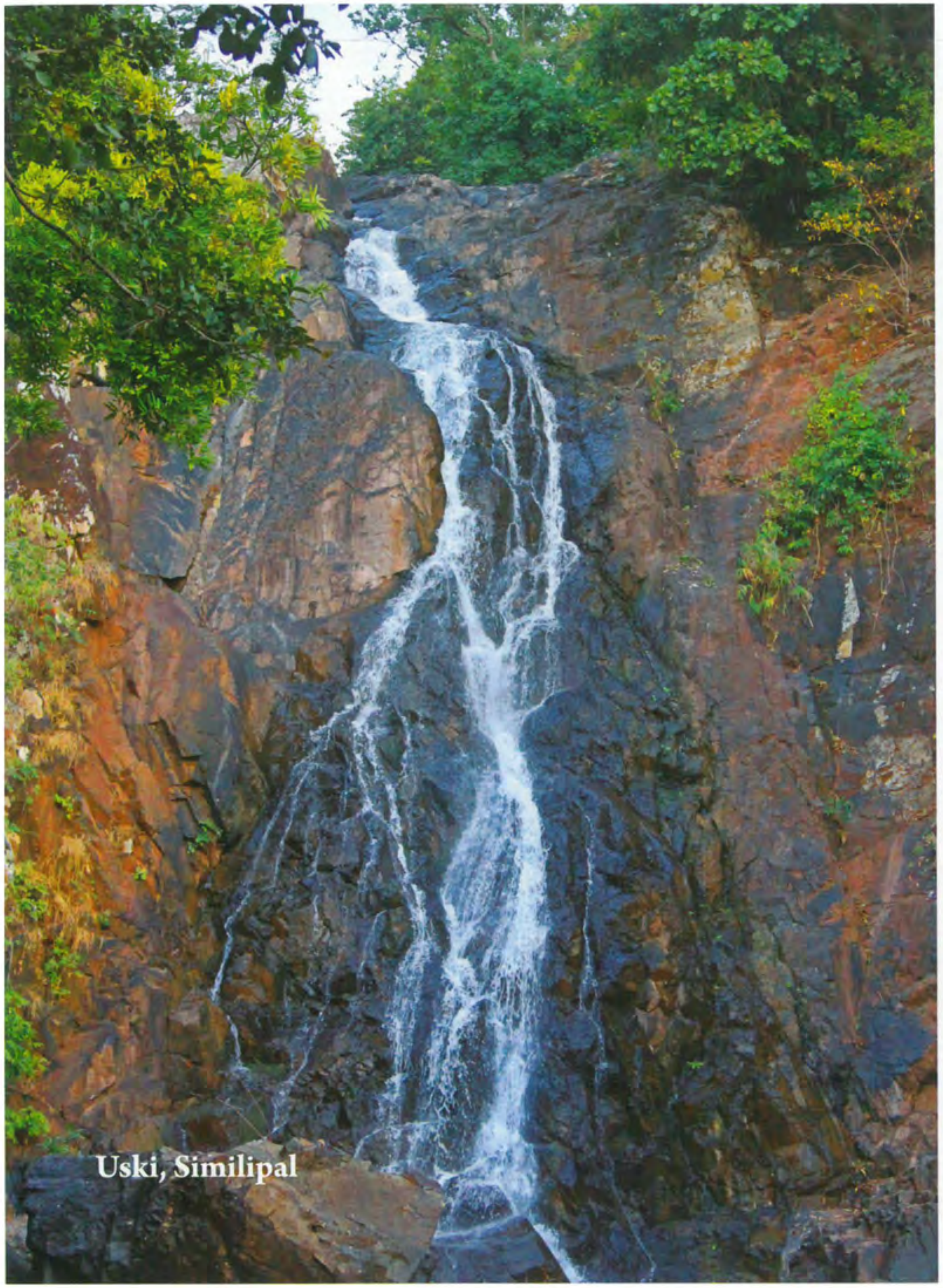
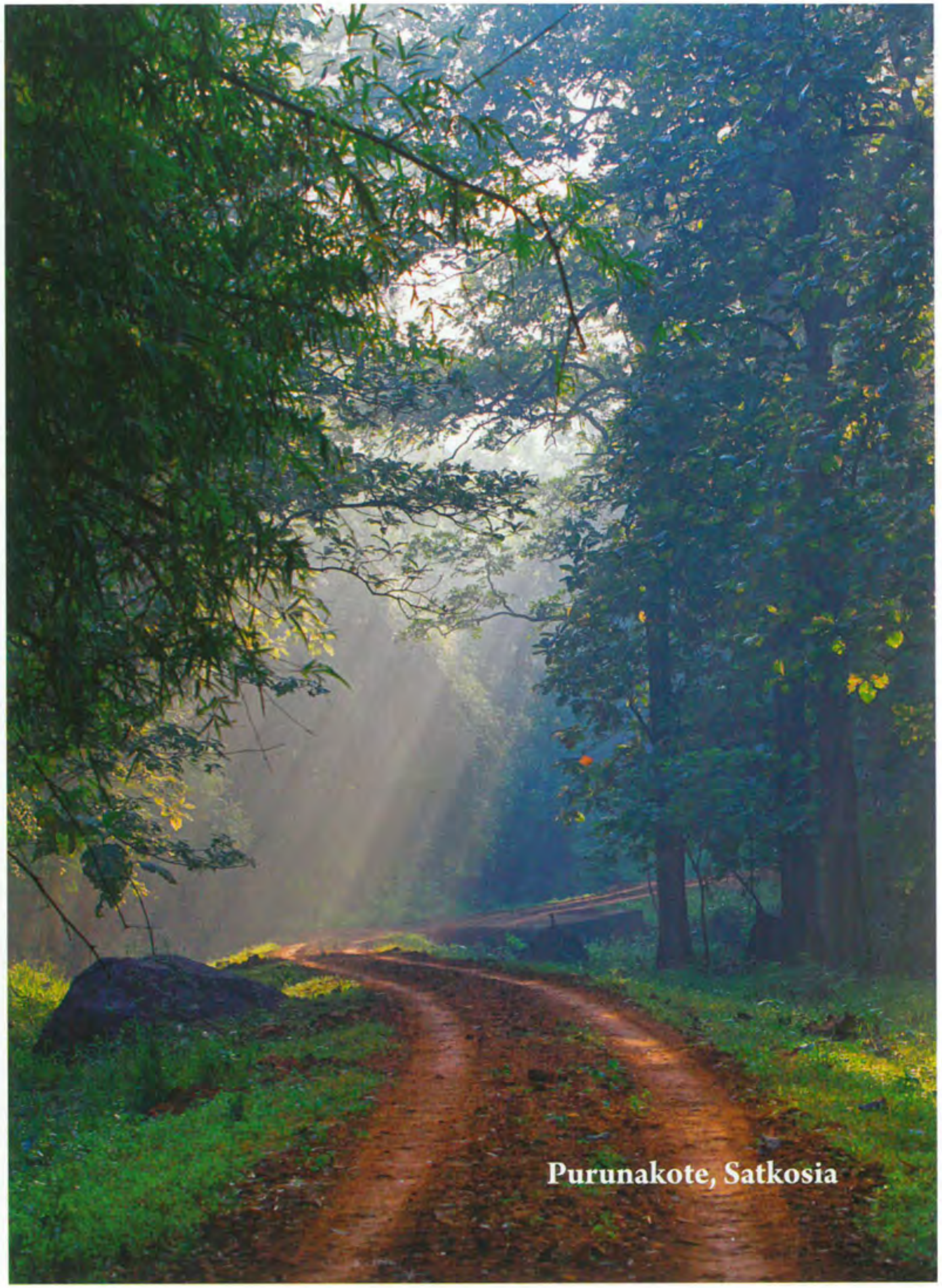

Uski, Similipal


Purunakote, Satkosia

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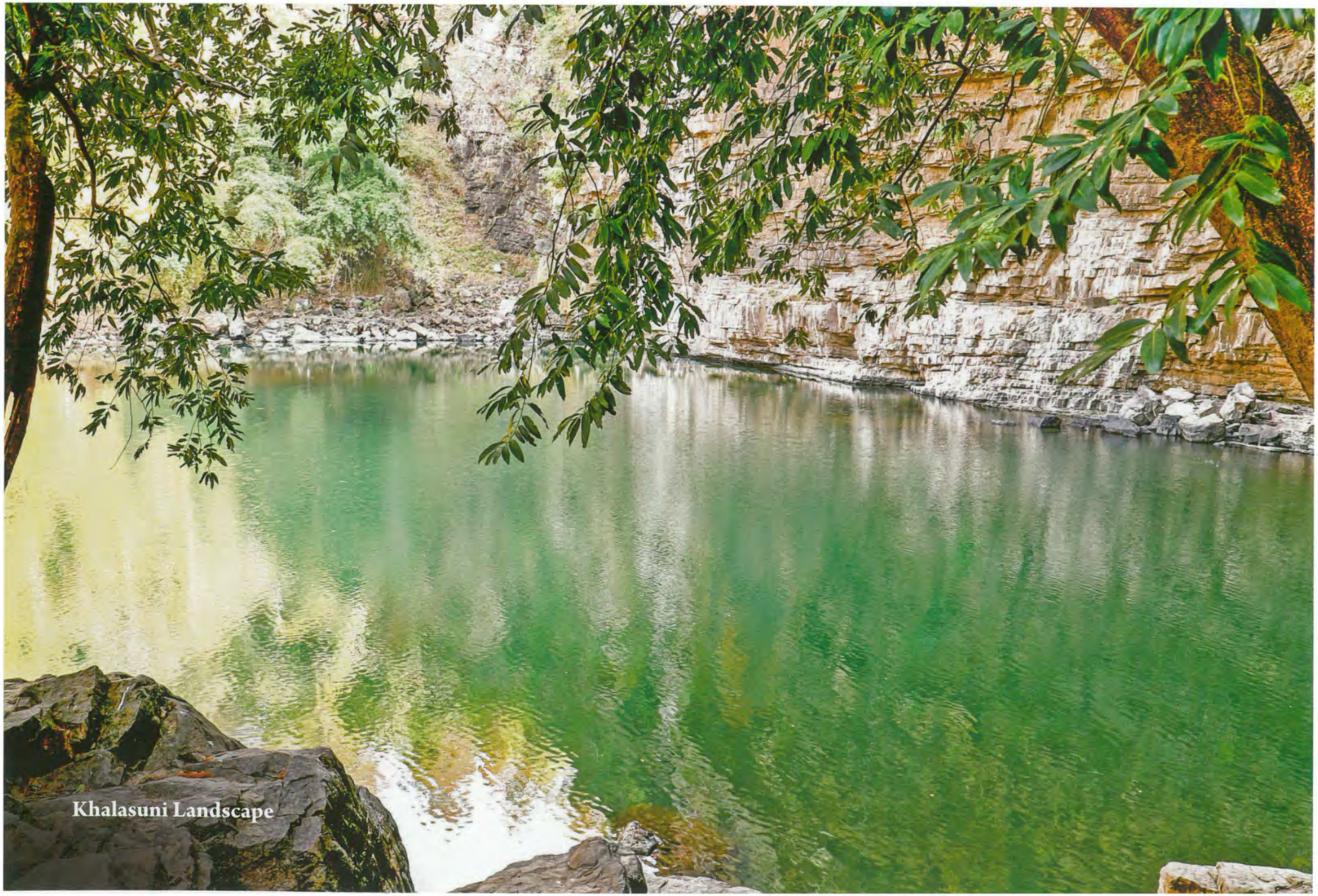
Khalasuni Landscape

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Chandaka Landscape

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Meghasani Peak, Similipal

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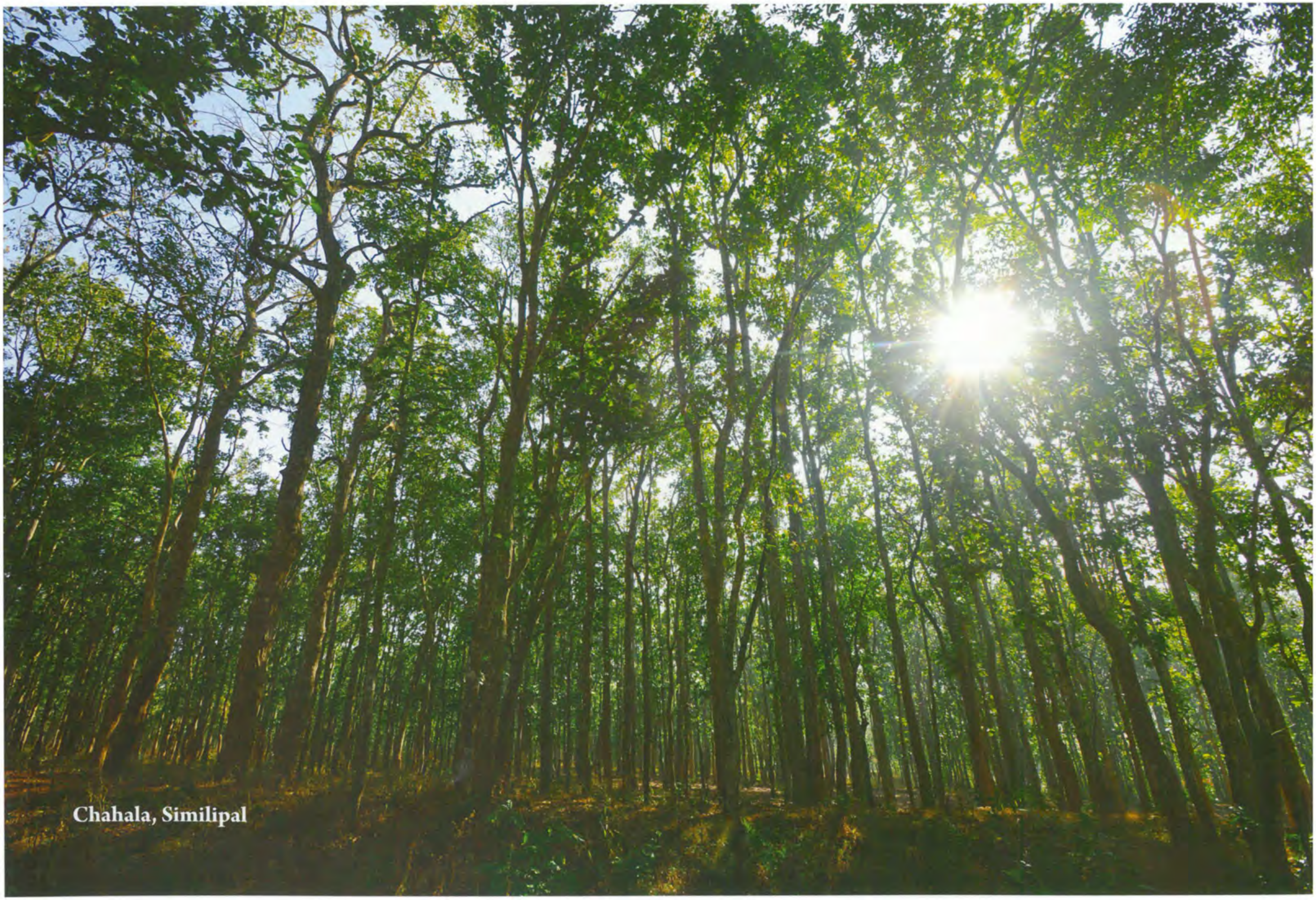

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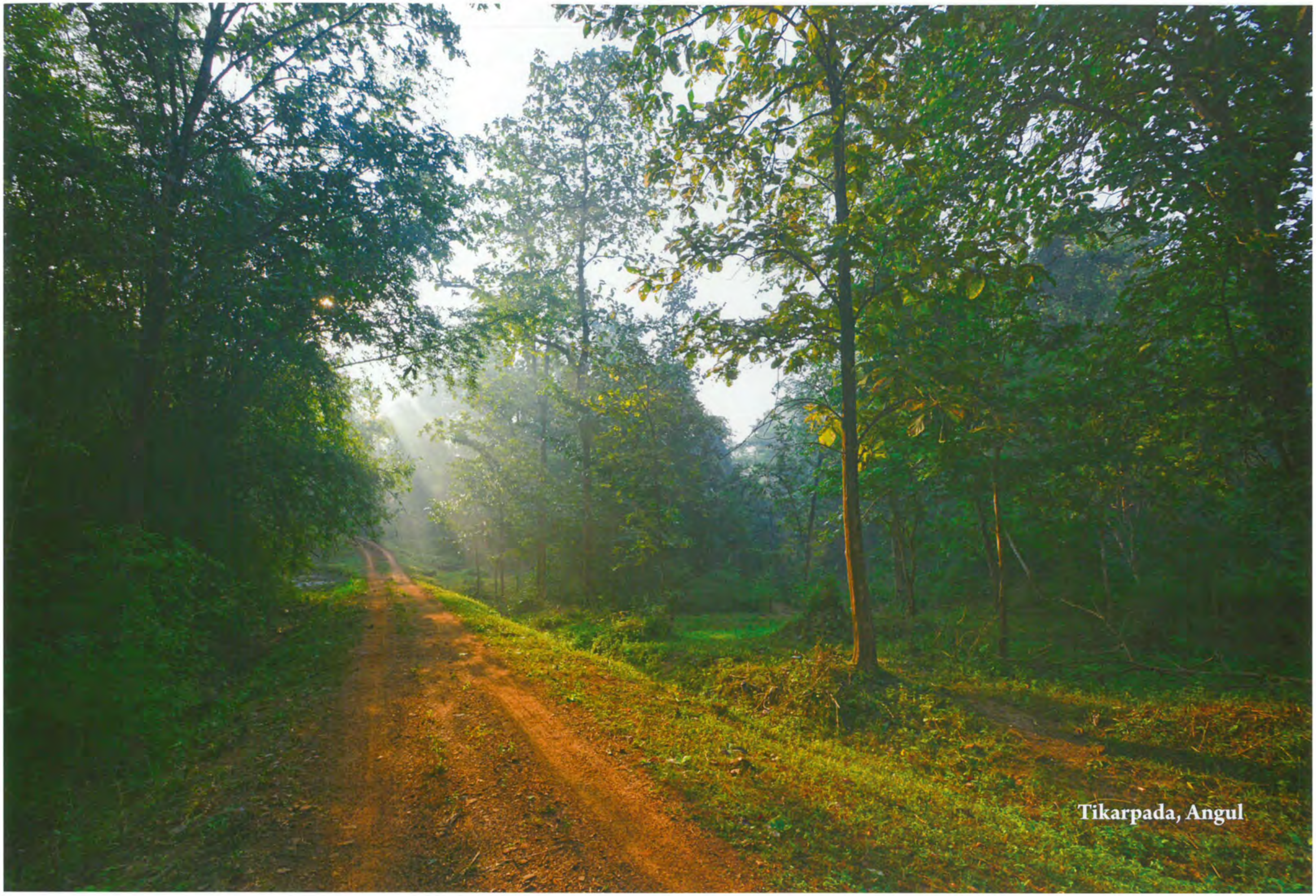

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River Khairi at Gurguria, Similipal

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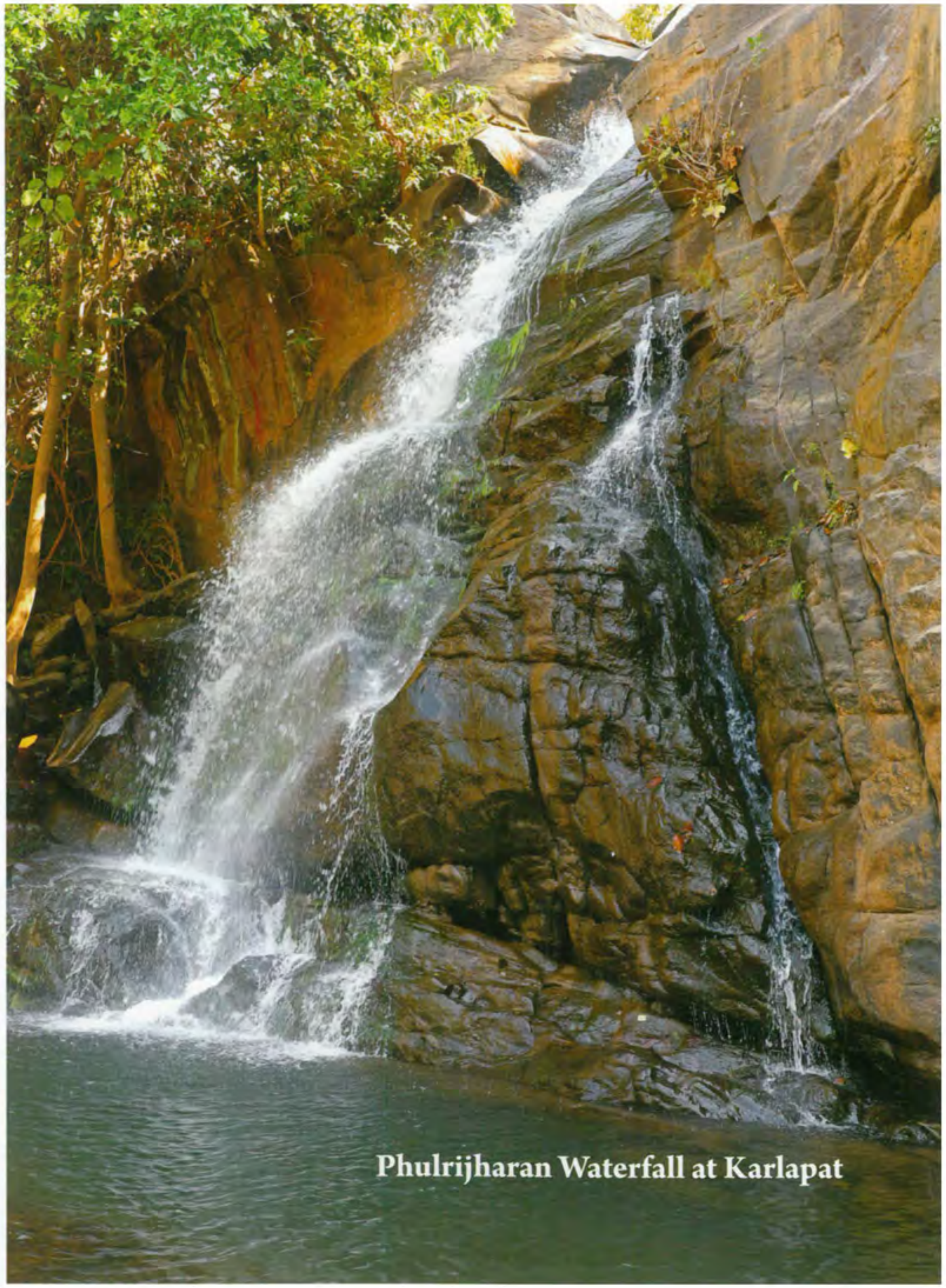

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Joranda Waterfall at Similipal

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River Khairi at Jenabill, Similipal

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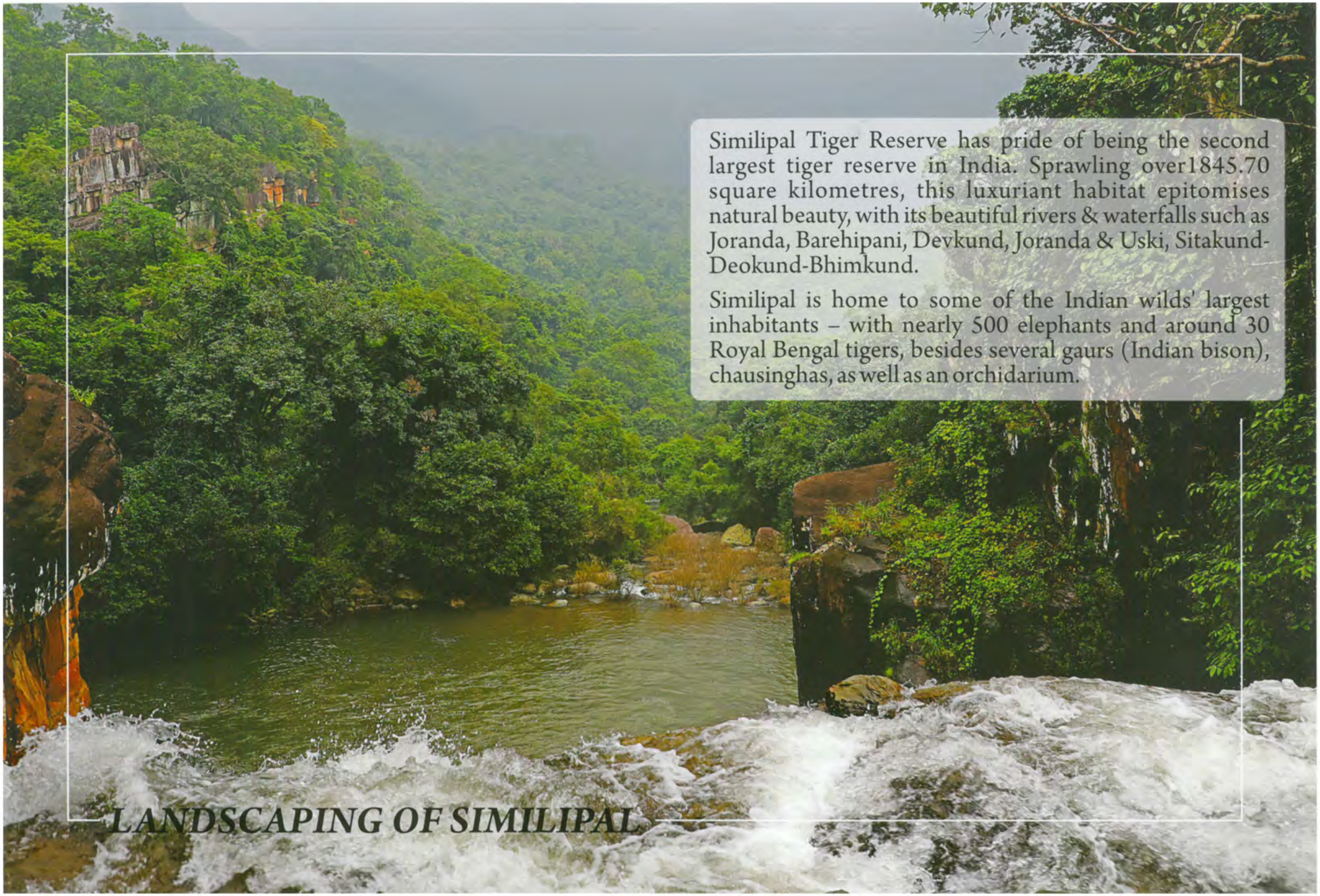

Similipal Tiger Reserve has pride of being the second largest tiger reserve in India. Sprawling over1845.70 square kilometres, this luxuriant habitat epitomises natural beauty, with its beautiful rivers & waterfalls such as Joranda, Barehipani, Devkund, Joranda & Uski, Sitakund-Deokund-Bhimkund.

Similipal is home to some of the Indian wilds' largest inhabitants – with nearly 500 elephants and around 30 Royal Bengal tigers, besides several gaurs (Indian bison), chausinghas, as well as an orchidarium.

LANDSCAPING OF SIMILIPAL

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Jenabill Landscape at Similipal

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Tusker in action at Similipal

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ECO-TOURISM

With highly diversified landscapes, Odisha offers some of the most spectacular eco-tourism destinations in the country. With its bustling wildlife and nature reserves, the state is the hotbed of Eco-tourism. Thirty five locations for camping to trekking, boating and beyond, Nature-tourism in Odisha offers it all. Pristine forests, mountains, valleys, waterfalls, gorges, soaring peaks with stunning wildlife grant Eco-tourism in Odisha a whole new meaning.

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Tourists at Rissia Nature Camp at Kuldiha, Balasore

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Nature Camp at Badamul, Nayagarh

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Daringbadi Nature Camp, Kandhamal

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Nature Camp Saluapalli, Bhanjanagar

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Kumari Nature Camp, Similipal

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BEHIND THE CAMERA

ASHIS DHIR - WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER
A seasoned and reputed lens man, currently focused passionately on his long cherished dream of conserving art, heritage, tribes and culture of India through his camera. His penchant takes him regularly to national parks and sanctuaries resulting in awe-inspiring snaps

C K PATTNAIK - WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER
A photographer par excellence, he captures every moment to its finest detail, making every picture as lively as it could be.

SAROJ KUMAR PANDA - WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER
With camera in his hand, he puts life into anything and everything. And wildlife takes the best out ofhim.

BIJAY KUMAR DAS - WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER
Naturalist with a Penchant for clicks/snaps

ANSHU PRAGYAN DAS (OFS-I) - DFO MAHANADI WILDLIFE DIVISION
She swears by her camera, and loves her close encounters with fauna in their natural surroundings.

DR. JD PATI, IFS
A 2012 batch officer, he is a trained wildlife veterinarian, currently working as Deputy Director, Similipal, with keen interest in Wildlife Management, Photography and Philately.

Edited by
Dr. Sandeep Tripathi, Mihir K. Biswal and Nimain C. Palei

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The publication provides visible visual results of PCCF's efforts towards wildlife conservation interventions. The book will also serve as a reminder to all stakeholders and general masses that wildlife conservation is a common responsibility we all share.

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NATURE'S WONDERLAND

ODISHA

Forest and Environment Department

Government of Odisha

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